

REMARKS

The applicants have carefully considered the Office action dated August 14, 2006 and the references it cites. By way of this Response, claims 21, 23, 24 and 26 have been amended. In view of the following, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The Office action rejected the pending claims under 35 USC § 112. In response, the term “destination” has been substituted for the term “originating” throughout the claims. The 112 rejections have, thus, been mooted.

The Office action took no position on the applicability of the previous art rejections against the pending claims due to the 112 issue. The 112 issue has been overcome and the previous art rejections are not proper against the pending claims.

As explained in the prior response, independent claim 21 recites a method comprising, among other things, performing a number identifier operation at a service switching point of a first carrier based on a destination number of a call without contacting a service control point; and, when the number identifier operation indicates the destination number belongs to a predetermined set of destination numbers, routing the call from the service switching point of the first carrier over a private line to a switch of an intermediate carrier. Kay et al. do not teach or suggest such a method.

While Kay et al. describe a system wherein a service control point (SCP) is accessed to determine call routing, Kay et al. do not teach or suggest a method wherein, without contacting an SCP, a service switching point (SSP)

determines whether to route a call to an intermediate carrier switch over a private line or a line different from the private line based on whether a number identifier operation indicates a destination number belongs to a predetermined set. On the contrary, the routing instructions in Kay et al. are always provided from an SCP. (See, Col. 6, lines 15-21). Thus, Kay et al. cannot fairly be said to teach or suggest the method of claim 21. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 21 and all claims depending therefrom are allowable over Kay et al.

Independent claim 28 is also patentable. Claim 28 recites a virtual private network comprising, among other things, an intermediate carrier switch routing a call between a first private virtual network and a second private virtual network, wherein, when a number identifier operation performed at a service switching point indicates a destination number of the call belongs to a set of destination numbers, the first private virtual network is coupled to the intermediate carrier switch over a private line, and, when the number identifier operation indicates the destination number does not belong to the set of destination numbers, the first private virtual network is coupled to the intermediate carrier switch over a public line. As discussed above, Kay et al. do not teach or suggest such a network. Accordingly, claim 28 and all claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

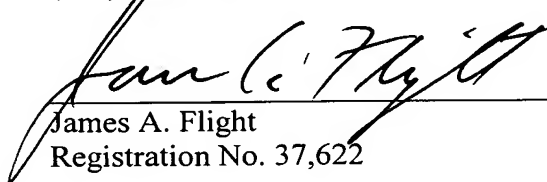
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number identified below.

Respectfully submitted,

HANLEY, FLIGHT & ZIMMERMAN, LLC.
Suite 4220
20 North Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(312) 580-1020

By:


James A. Flight
Registration No. 37,622

August 31, 2006